

Interracial Relationships - Right or Wrong?

Joseph Herrin (03-13-2014)



Recently I have had several people write to me on the subject of interracial relationships. This is a subject I have encountered repeatedly throughout my years of ministry. Not having a published teaching on the subject, I have found myself having to construct a response from scratch each time the topic crops up. Since I find myself once more having to write on this issue, this time to answer the inquiry of a man in prison, I believe it would be profitable to post something publicly.

Let me begin by stating that not all people who think interracial marriage is wrong harbor enmity in their hearts toward people of other races. There are a small percentage of people who sincerely think marrying a person of another race is not God's will, while they have no qualms with being friends, attending church, or otherwise associating, with people of other races. In my estimation those who hold this view comprise a very small percentage of all those who disapprove of interracial relationships. I have observed that most who disapprove of interracial marriage harbor some prejudice against people of other races. I believe it is proper, however, to make a distinction between a disapproval of interracial unions and racial prejudice, for although they are frequently found together, it is possible for these beliefs or attitudes to be distinct from one another.

The *Merriam Webster Dictionary* defines the word "Prejudice" in the following manner.

Prejudice:

:an unfair feeling of dislike for a person or group because of race, sex, religion, etc.

: a feeling of like or dislike for someone or something especially when it is not reasonable or logical

: preconceived judgment or opinion (2) : an adverse opinion or leaning formed without just grounds or before sufficient knowledge

:an irrational attitude of hostility directed against an individual, a group, a race, or their supposed characteristics

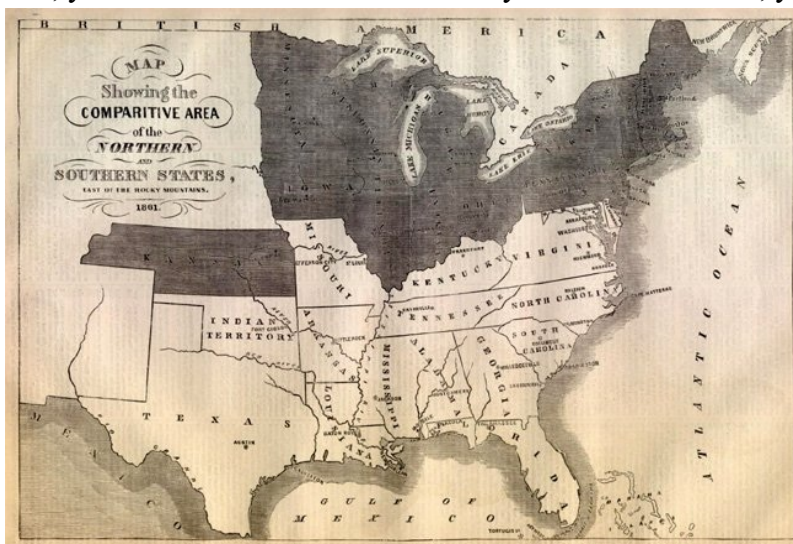
Racial prejudice, consequently, would be defined as "prejudice against, or hostility toward, people of another race or color or of an alien culture."

I was born in America's Deep South, an area that has garnered a reputation for being marred by deep seated racial prejudices. This prejudice is primarily associated with tensions between the white and black races. In other parts of America racial prejudice may be between those of Hispanic descent and those of the white or black races. Because America is a great melting pot of the various nationalities of the world, and these nations have often tended to congregate with members of their own races, one can observe racial prejudice among a great variety of people groups. It is not just a white/black phenomena.

Although I was born in the state of Georgia, the land of my father's family for many generations, I was not raised in the South. My dad joined the Air Force when he was young, and was transferred to the Pacific Northwest. My formative, early school years were spent in the suburbs of Portland, Oregon up until my Sophomore year of High School when my family moved back to Georgia. I cannot remember observing any racial prejudice as a child. Although my father was raised in the Deep South, I cannot ever recall him speaking a word of prejudice.

It came as a shock to me to move back to Georgia in my second year of High School. Before I observed any racial prejudice, I encountered the cultural disdain of Southerners for Yankees. This was not directed at me particularly, but rather it was often observed as the students my age made comments about people from the northern states. I had never heard the word "Yankee" used as a slur before this time, and I found it very odd. I thought all Americans were considered Yankees, as this name was first used by the British during the American Revolution as a slur against the American colonists. The colonists turned the tables on the British by wearing the name as a badge of pride.

Back in Georgia, I learned very quickly about the Mason Dixon Line. If you are not a Southerner, you may be unfamiliar with this phrase. The Mason Dixon Line is named after two British surveyors hired by the Penn and Calvert families to mark out the boundaries of their corresponding states of Pennsylvania and Maryland in the 1760s. Later, the term Mason Dixon Line was used to describe the border between northern and southern states in the American Civil War. If you lived north of the line, you were considered a Yankee. If you lived south of it, you were a Rebel.



Mason Dixon Line

Curiously, people from the northern states don't seem to carry as much antipathy towards Southerners as Southerners do for Northerners. I had never heard anyone from the north use the term "Rebel" as an epithet when referring to a citizen of the southern states. It was very common in the South, however, to hear Northerners reviled as "Yankees."

I was quite naive when it came to the subject of racial prejudice. I had not observed it growing up in Oregon. This was largely due to the absence of other races in the suburbs that I was raised in. After moving to Georgia I began to hear people use the "N" word when speaking of members of the black race. I viewed these manifestations of racial prejudice as evidence of someone exhibiting a very carnal nature. I assumed that "Christian" people would not do so, or certainly would not do so openly. How wrong I was.

When I was not long out of High School my family attended a very traditional Southern Baptist church in the town we were living in. There was a historically black college in the town, and the new assistant pastor, who also served as the youth and young adult minister, asked me to ride with him to pick up a couple of Nigerian exchange students who were attending the college. After a couple weeks of doing this, the associate pastor gave some excuse about not being available to pick them up and asked me if I would do so myself. I was happy to comply.

When I drove up in my car in the parking lot of this Southern Baptist church I noticed that other church members were staring at us. They continued to do so as I walked with these two college age men over to the church sanctuary. I sat down alongside them on one of the pews about half way back in the sanctuary. It was a large pew and the church was crowded, but I was surprised to see that no one else sat on the pew with us. I was pretty slow to realize what was going on. It actually took me a few weeks before I realized that the church members resented me bringing black college students to the church. I was astonished as this realization dawned upon me. I thought that these professing Christians would want to be active in evangelization of all people, and to welcome all comers to the church. I remember expressing to another person at the time that I thought it was as absurd to resent a man for his skin color as it was to dislike him for his shoe size.

These Nigerian college students would come over to my parents' house after church. My older sister and I would spend time with them. One of the young men told me that he did not relate well to the black students at the college. He said his family life in Nigeria was more akin to that of the suburban white American than it was to the black culture of America. The great tragedy is that these young men had come to the American South in the 1980s to find that the white churches did not want them to be there.

I was offended at this revelation, and indignant that anyone who called themselves a Christian should behave in such an unrighteous manner. According to my understanding there were only two types of men in the world. There were those who were born of Adam (carnal men), and those who were born again of the Spirit of Christ (spiritual men). I deemed it to be common sense that Christians would embrace one another, no matter what their national or racial origin. To this day I consider it to be one of the most fundamental and tragic failures among Christians for them to manifest a spirit of prejudice toward another race of people. I will not prove deficient in laying a Scriptural foundation for this conclusion.

When a lawyer asked the Son of God what was the greatest commandment in the Law, Yahshua replied:

Matthew 22:37-39

“You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.' This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like it: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’”

Of course, lawyers like to have things buttoned down. They look for loopholes. The man then asked Yahshua, “Who is my neighbor?” This proved to be the occasion in which Christ spoke the well known parable of The Good Samaritan.

Luke 10:30-37

"A certain man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho; and he fell among robbers, and they stripped him and beat him, and went off leaving him half dead. And by chance a certain priest was going down on that road, and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side. And likewise a Levite also, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. But a certain Samaritan, who was on a journey, came upon him; and when he saw him, he felt compassion, and came to him, and bandaged up his wounds, pouring oil and wine on them; and he put him on his own beast, and brought him to an inn, and took care of him. And on the next day he took out two denarii and gave them to the innkeeper and said, 'Take care of him; and whatever more you spend, when I return, I will repay you.' Which of these three do you think proved to be a neighbor to the man who fell into the robbers' hands?" And he said, "The one who showed mercy toward him." And Yahshua said to him, "Go and do the same."

I recently came across a modern day example of this as I was doing some Internet research. The KKK (Ku Klux Klan) was holding a rally in an American city. A large number of protestors numbering in the hundreds showed up at the rally. They greatly outnumbered the Klansmen. The protestors were of different races. Some of the protestors saw a white man standing and observing the proceedings who was wearing a Confederate Flag shirt. He had cut off sleeves, and Nazi tattoos on his arm. It was assumed that this man was a member of the Klan, which multiple sites are reporting as being unfounded.



The crowd began chasing the man and eventually caught him and knocked him to the ground. Some of the protestors began kicking and pummeling the man.



Seeing what was happening, Keshia Thomas, an 18 year old black woman, intervened to shield the man from his attackers. She positioned herself over the man, and warded off his assailants.



Although the man likely harbored prejudice in thinking the white race is superior, Keshia Thomas had compassion on him as he was being assaulted. She said it was wrong for a man to be attacked for his beliefs, no matter what they were.



One website reported the following:

After the incident, she didn't hear a "Thank you" from the man she protected. But she did hear from someone close to him. Reflecting on the incident today, Keshia told a local news station that months after the riot, a younger man came up to her in a coffee shop and thanked her. He turned out to be the victim's son:

"Thanks," he said. "For what?" Keshia asked. "That was my dad," the man replied.

Learning that the man had a son, Thomas said, gave her a greater perspective on everything:

"Imagine what would have happened if they had killed his father out there. That would have just been another person filled with anger, hate and revenge."

Whether or not she is a Christian, this young woman fulfilled the command of Christ that day to "love your neighbor as yourself." Race proved to be no barrier to her compassion for another human being. How much more should this be true of those who are born again of the Spirit of Christ?

A Christian may acknowledge that they are to love all men, no matter their race, skin color, language, or nationality, but what about **marrying** someone of another race? Doesn't the Bible forbid interracial marriages? The technical word for marriage, or cohabitation, between two people of different races is "miscegenation" (from *mixed* + *genus* - a class or group of individuals). There have been a number of Christians throughout the centuries who have taught that God forbids such unions. This teaching continues to this day as the correspondence I receive demonstrates.

One of the common arguments I encounter is that in Genesis we are told that God created every creature "after its kind." The argument follows, that men and women should only mate with their own kind. Such an argument strikes me as ridiculous for we are told that God created only one man. He did not create multiple men who were of different types. Furthermore, we are told that Yahweh took a remnant portion of the man and formed woman. Adam and Eve were the first man and woman, and Yahweh created no others on this earth. Eve became "the mother of all living," and Adam was her only husband.

As one looks further down the history of mankind it is shown that approximately 1,500 years after Adam's creation that Yahweh destroyed the earth with a flood. Once more the creation was reduced to a bare minimum. Only those animals that Noah took on the ark survived to repopulate the earth, and Noah's family (his wife, his three sons and their wives) were left of mankind to repopulate as well. Anyone who accepts the Bible account as true has to concede that there is only one "kind" of man. We are all descendants of Adam, and we are all descendants of Noah through his three sons Shem, Ham, and Japheth.

Genesis 9:19

These three were the sons of Noah; and *from these the whole earth was populated.*

In Genesis chapter 10 we are provided with the table of nations. Yahweh tells us what nations came from each of Noah's sons. In chapter 11 we are told how the descendants of Noah, who were initially all one people with one language, were divided into nations and tongues at the tower of Babel. This is the beginning of the separation of the races of mankind. This separation became further established when Yahweh divided the earth itself, for it was formerly one continent as even scientists have affirmed. This single continent is referred to as Pangaea by geologists. Having divided men into groups and scattered them across this single continent, Yahweh then divided the earth itself.

Genesis 10:25

And two sons were born to Eber; the name of the one was Peleg, *for in his days the earth was divided...*

As these families of mankind lived in isolation from one another they developed their distinct identities. The influence of their particular gene pool, diet, activity, climate, geography, amount of sunlight, and even the effects of sin, are some of the factors that have shaped these families, causing them to take upon their characteristics. Christians who would look at the differences among the races of mankind and doubt that this great variety could be the result of environmental and lifestyle factors over the course of a few thousand years, have the testimony of Scriptures to overcome. In Paul's famous speech to the Athenians at the Areopagus, he stated:

Acts 17:26

He made also of one blood every nation of men, to dwell upon all the face of the earth - having ordained times before appointed, and the bounds of their dwellings
[Young's Literal Translation]



One young man wrote to me the following question:

If Adam was white, where did blacks come from?

The question itself presupposes a fact that is likely false. The Genesis account says nothing of Adam being a white man. The actual name “Adam” gives us a clue to his coloration, for Adam means “ruddy,” or “reddish in color.” It is far more likely that Adam’s skin tone was what some would describe as a “mid-brown” tone, perhaps having the coloration of a native of India.

If someone cares to have it explained to them how genetic diversity has developed, there are plenty of resources online to study. For example, the following webpage explains how differences in skin color manifest.

<http://christiananswers.net/q-aig/race-skincolor.html>

There are some very strange, even profane, teachings being set forth for the origin of the races today. One of the popular teachings I encounter is referred to as “the serpent seed doctrine.” This doctrine suggests that Cain was the offspring of Satan having sexual relations with Eve. Usually, this doctrine suggests that either a particularly evil race of men, or the black race, resulted from this illicit union. Of course, then the adherents of this doctrine have to find ways to explain how this race survived the flood of Noah’s day, for they were not members of Noah’s family.

This is actually an ancient teaching. It was present among the Gnostic heresies of the early church age, and is found in the occult teachings of the Kabbalah. Despite the fact that this doctrine is easily refuted by a study of the Bible, there are teachers today who continue to find a following as they teach these deceptions. In the book of Genesis God has told us that Cain is the offspring of Adam and Eve.

Genesis 4:1

Now Adam had relations with his wife Eve, and she conceived and gave birth to Cain, and she said, "I have gotten a manchild with the help of Yahweh."

You would think that this Scripture alone would end all dispute on the matter. It presents such a clear declaration of Cain’s parentage that there is no possibility for it to be misconstrued. When I shared this Scripture verse with one man who is teaching the serpent seed doctrine, his reply to me was, “I don’t care what the Bible says. God has given me revelation that the serpent seed doctrine is true.” There is no longer any basis for agreement when a man rejects the authority of the word of God.

II Timothy 3:16-17

All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work.

There are other Scriptural proofs that all the races of mankind have descended from Adam, obviating the possibility of a serpent race of men. One key passage is contained in Paul’s discourse to the Romans about the origins of sin.

Romans 5:12

Through *one man* sin entered into the world...

Romans 5:16

For on the one hand the judgment arose from *one transgression*...

Romans 5:17

By *the transgression of the one*, death reigned through *the one*...

Romans 5:18

Through *one transgression* there resulted condemnation to all men...

Romans 5:19

Through the *one man's disobedience* the many were made sinners...

If there exists a race of men that did not come through Adam, all of these statements are false. There must be more than one man through whom sin entered the world, and there must be more than one transgression, for each race must fall individually.

I trust these proofs are sufficient for any with an honest heart and a love of truth to discern that there has ever only existed one race of man since God formed Adam. What men call races today are actually variations in a single race. There are genus level differences among the one Adamic race, the human race. Neither are there multiple “kinds” of men, according to the Biblical meaning of the word in the first chapter of Genesis. Yahweh created only one man who stands as the progenitor of all others.

Let us move on to another objection. Some suggest that the prohibitions Yahweh placed upon the descendants of Abraham to not intermarry with the nations of Canaan among whom they dwelt is a pattern that all are to follow.

Deuteronomy 7:1-4

“When Yahweh your God shall bring you into the land where you are entering to possess it, and shall clear away many nations before you, the Hittites and the Girgashites and the Amorites and the Canaanites and the Perizzites and the Hivites and the Jebusites, seven nations greater and stronger than you, and when Yahweh your God shall deliver them before you, and you shall defeat them, then you shall utterly destroy them. You shall make no covenant with them and show no favor to them. ***Furthermore, you shall not intermarry with them; you shall not give your daughters to their sons, nor shall you take their daughters for your sons. For they will turn your sons away from following Me to serve other gods; then the anger of Yahweh will be kindled against you, and He will quickly destroy you.***”

A critical part of understanding the relationship of this prohibition to the church under the new covenant is revealed as one examines the reason Yahweh provides for this restriction. He has said, “*For they will turn your sons away from following Me to serve other gods...*” It must be noted that Yahweh says nothing about the physical incompatibility, or the racial diversity of these nations. He

does not forbid the descendants of Abraham to intermarry with these seven nations because of their skin color, the condition of their hair, the hue of their eyes, or any other physical feature. The prohibition is completely due to the idolatry these nations have embraced.

We find this same prohibition *in principle* in the New Testament.

II Corinthians 6:14-16

Do not be bound together with unbelievers; for what partnership have righteousness and lawlessness, or what fellowship has light with darkness? Or what harmony has Christ with Belial, or what has a believer in common with an unbeliever? Or what agreement has the temple of God with idols? For we are the temple of the living God...

The apostle Paul writes much about marriage when he addresses the church in Corinth. Paul, though a Jewish believer of the tribe of Benjamin, is the apostle to the Gentiles. The word “Gentiles” literally means “nations.” Rome was a great melting pot of nations similar to America today. There was much diversity among the citizens of Rome, and in the churches to whom Paul ministered. Nevertheless, the apostle never forbids the members of Christ’s body to marry people of other nationalities. His only prohibition is that they cannot marry an unbeliever.

I Corinthians 7:39

A wife is bound as long as her husband lives; but if her husband is dead, she is free to be married to whom she wishes, *only in the Lord*.

This phrase “only in the Lord” means a Christian woman can marry only those who are members of the body of Christ. The pattern we see between the Old and New Testaments is “first the natural, then the spiritual.” Yet even under the Old Covenant Yahweh’s grace was present. The doctrine of a pure Jewish race is actually a myth. There were numerous occasions of the descendants of Abraham marrying people of other nations. This is true even of the lineage of Christ.

Abraham was an Aramean. When he chose a wife for his son Isaac he did so from among his own people. Abraham sent a trusted servant back to his ancestral home to choose a bride from among his relatives. Rebekah was the daughter of “Bethuel the son of Milcah, the wife of Abraham's brother Nahor.” In turn, when Isaac’s son Jacob was in search of a wife, he too went back to the land of his kin and married Leah and Rachel. From this point forward we no longer read of Abraham’s descendants returning to take wives of their Aramean kinfolk. Many of their wives were taken from the nations around them. On occasion they were even taken from the seven nations with whom Yahweh had forbidden them to marry.

Joseph was sold into Egypt by his brothers. When he was thirty years of age Pharaoh gave him a wife, Asenath, the daughter of Potiphera, the priest of On. Egypt was not one of the seven nations of prohibition, but neither was it a Hebrew nation. Joseph’s Egyptian wife bore him Manasseh and Ephraim whose descendants became two of the largest tribes of Israel. Similarly, we are told that Judah married a Canaanite woman.

Genesis 38:1-2

And it came about at that time, that Judah departed from his brothers, and visited a certain Adullamite, whose name was Hirah. And Judah saw there a daughter of a certain Canaanite whose name was Shua; and he took her and went in to her.

Shua bore to Judah three sons, two of whom died. Shelah, however, lived and became the father of one of the families of Judah, along with Zerah and Perez who were descended of Tamar whose ancestry is not given.

Furthermore, we are told that Rahab the harlot from Jericho was taken in among the people of Israel. This Canaanite woman married Salmon of the tribe of Judah and became the mother of Boaz. This is the same Boaz spoken of in the book of Ruth. It is from Rahab's lineage that David descended, and from David that Yahshua descended.

Matthew 1:5-6

And to Salmon was born Boaz by Rahab; and to Boaz was born Obed by Ruth; and to Obed, Jesse; and to Jesse was born David the king.

Not only was Boaz descended from Rahab the Canaanite, but he married Ruth who was a Moabite.

Ruth 1:3-4

Then Elimelech, Naomi's husband, died; and she was left with her two sons. ***And they took for themselves Moabite women as wives;*** the name of the one was Orpah and the name of the other Ruth.

The Moabites were not among the seven nations the Hebrews were forbidden to intermarry. They were descended from Lot when he impregnated his oldest daughter after they fled from Sodom. She became pregnant and bore a son named Moab. Although Ruth, as a Moabite, was a distant relative of Abraham and his descendants, for Abraham was Lot's uncle, she was not a Hebrew.

It is also recorded that Moses, the Law giver, married a Cushite woman.

Numbers 12:1

Then Miriam and Aaron spoke against Moses because of the Cushite woman whom he had married (for he had married a Cushite woman).

Many Christians do not understand the dynamics of what is being declared in the verse above. Miriam and Aaron disapproved of Moses' wife because she was a Cushite. The Cushite's were descended of Ham, the son of Noah that dishonored his father resulting in a curse upon his descendants (specifically upon Canaan).

Genesis 10:6

And the sons of Ham were Cush and Mizraim and Put and Canaan.

The descendants of Cush settled in what is now known as Ethiopia. They have traditionally been

among some of the most dark skinned people on earth. Miriam, Moses' older sister, disapproved of his marriage and criticized Moses. Yahweh, however, reprovved Miriam for her presumption and she was stricken with leprosy for seven days.

One should not forget the Shunammite who is the lover of Solomon in The Song of Solomon. She describes her skin as being dark as the tents of Kedar. She was referring to the black goat hair tents of the Bedouin people.



Black Bedouin Tents

Song of Solomon 1:5

“I am black but lovely, O daughters of Jerusalem. Like the tents of Kedar. Like the curtains of Solomon.”

When one looks at the entire testimony of the Bible, there is found no prohibition forbidding a Christian to marry a person of another race (nationality). If a man or woman has been born again of the Spirit of Christ their identity is no longer a terrestrial one.

II Corinthians 5:16-17

Therefore from now on we recognize no man according to the flesh... Therefore if any man is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come.

As those who are born again of the seed of Christ, we are members of a new race of mankind. We are made one through Christ.

Romans 12:5

So we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another.

I Corinthians 12:13

For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free, and we were all made to drink of one Spirit.

Ephesians 4:4-6

There is one body and one Spirit, just as also you were called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all who is over all and through all and in all.

It was in understanding this truth at a young age that I was so astonished at the prejudice and lack of love manifested by those who called themselves Christians at that Southern Baptist church many years ago. I continue to be grieved in spirit when I observe any Christian manifesting an attitude of racial prejudice. We are called to something much higher.

I am not a Jew by natural descent. I am from the nations, from the Gentiles. If Christ had died for Jews only, I would be lost without hope, as would millions of others. If the Son of God had not appointed apostles, prophets, and teachers to be sent to the Gentiles I would suffer a tremendous loss, and so too would other Gentile believers. It seems unconscionable to me to not demonstrate the same love and acceptance of people of all nations as Yahshua has done.

I John 3:18

Little children, let us not love with word or with tongue, but in deed and truth.

May you be blessed with peace and understanding in these days.